

POLITICAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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most important event in Manuelito's career, namely that the handsome young nobleman from the south, who entered the King's bodyguard at the Palace, owed his rapid rise, his wealth, his dukedom, his many offices, his Bourbon marriage, to the fact that he had secured the favour of one of the most dissolute women who ever sat on a throne. He was not without abilities, and he was never a man of blood ; but the stain on his scutcheon is not removed by calmly ignoring what every Spaniard except perhaps Charles IV himself knew perfectly well. His two volumes are filled with tributes of affectionate admiration to the mindless but well-meaning and good-natured King, whose friendship and confidence he shared in sunshine and tribulation to the end. The royal support lasted long after the Queen had transferred her patronage to other suitors, and Ferdinand, one day to become the vilest of Spanish rulers, had emerged as an open enemy.

" They were a wretched lot,"⁹ remarked Napoleon in speaking of the Spanish dynasty and Government which he deposed, " but Godoy was the best man among them." His apologia affirms again and again that he was never a dictator, and that the King in Council always pronounced the final decision, but he shows no false modesty in describing his achievements. He was the friend, not the mere favourite, of the monarch, he declares, " and attempted to deserve my good fortune." In the field of foreign affairs he began by supporting his master's unavailing efforts to save the life of his kinsman, Louis XVI. Then he took Spain into the war which the French regicides unleashed, waged it with energy, and came out of it unscathed in 1795, earning thereby his title Prince of the Peace. At home he kept his country free from the revolutionary fever by judi-

ous reforms, preserving the Monarchy,
encouraging education
and agriculture, science and learning, clipping
the wings of
the Inquisition, tempering justice with mercy in
what he
describes as the gentlest regime Spain had ever
known. "I
have nobly and faithfully served my country. She
has no right
to reproach me with a single error of omission
or neglect; I
have benefited many ; no one can venture to
affirm that I have
been the cause of his ruin." Yet, like other men in
high place,
he had many critics and rivals. " All the enemies
of progress
and reform were my opponents."

Godoy desired to resign after the conclusion of
the French
war, and his wish was granted in 1798. He
retained the favour
of the Court, returning to office, though not to
his old tin-